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Message Text

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73-60
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 COA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 CG-00 INT-08 AGR-20 DOTE-00

DLOS-06 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /190 W
---------- 088170
P 162350Z APR 74
FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3439
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIOR TY
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 210

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR EFIS BH
SUBJECT: BELIZEAN PLANS TO ENFORCE FISHING LAWS

1. SUMMARY. ACTING PREMIER HUNTER HAS INDICATED TO US THAT BECAUSE OF REPEATED INCURSIONS INTO BELIZEAN WATERS BY GUATEMALAN AND HONDURAN FISHING BOATS, HE HAS DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE PERSONALLY IN AN ENFORCEMENT OPERATION BY BELIZEAN PATROL BOATS BEGINNING APRIL 17 WHICH HUNTER SAID WOULD RESULT IN SEIZURE OF ANY FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS FOUND IN BELIZEAN WATERS. END SUMMARY.

2. ACTING PREMIER, A. A. HUNTER MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY TOLD ECON/COMMERCIAL OFFICER EASTER SUNDAY THAT BELIZEAN FISHERMEN HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING BITTERLY LATELY ABOUT ALLEGED POACHING BY HONDURAN AND ESPECIALLY GUATEMALAN FISHING BOATS IN BELIZEAN WATERS. BELIZEAN COMPLAINT IS THAT:

A. ACCORDING TO LAW HERE, FISHING IN TERRITORIAL WATERS IS RE-
SERVED TO NATIONALS. BELIZEAN FISHING INTERESTS ARE PRESSING GOB TO ENFORCE THIS LAW.
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B. BELIZEAN FISHERMEN ARE IN FIRST TWO WEEKS OF ANNUAL THREE-MONTH OFF-SEASON, BUT HONDURAN AND GUATEMALAN POACHERS HAVE CONTINUED TO OPERATE.

3. IN RESPONSE TO THESE COMPLAINTS, HUNTER INTENDS TO BOARD THE GOVERNOR'S YACHT, THE "PATRICIA," ON APRIL 17 AND PROCEED TO PLACENCIA AND PUNTA GORDA. AFTER CONFERRING WITH FISHING CO-OPERATIVES THERE HE WILL ORDER BELIZEAN PATROL BOATS TO SEIZE ANY FOREIGN FISHING BOATS ENCOUNTERED AND BRING THEM IN TO BELIZE CITY. EVEN IF NT SEIZURES ARE MADE, HUNTER SAID HE WAS DETERMINED TO INTENSIFY GOB PATROL OF WATERS ALONG THE BELIZEAN REEFS.

4. COMMENT: HUNTER GAVE THE IMPRESSION HE HOPED TO BAG A NUMBER OF BOATS AND MADE EXAMPLES OF THEM. HE SEEMED PARTICULARLY KEEN ON CAPTURING GUATEMALANS. AS A GOOD PUP MAN AND THE HUSBAND OF A COSTA RICAN, HE HAS SCANT TOLERANCE FOR HIS WESTERN NEIGHBORS. FURTHERMORE, HAVING LITTLE HOPE OF ANY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE BELIZE QUESTION IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, HE SEES NO REASON TO CONTINUE POLICY OF IGNORING GUATEMALAN INCURSIONS. SEVERAL OF THESE HAVE BEEN WITNESSED BY CONGEN OFFICERS, AND WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS FROM RELIABLE SOURCES THAT INTRUDERS HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY ACTIVE ON THE OUTER REEFS, TURNEFFE, LIGHTHOUSE AND GLOVERS. FISHERMEN CONSTITUTE ABOUT 5,000 VOTES IN THIS ELECTION YEAR, SO HUNTER FEELS HE IS OBLIGED TO RESPOND TO THEIR COMPLAINT, REGARDLESS OF EFFECT IT MAY HAVE ON BELIZE/GUATEMALA DISPUTE. GAWF

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